



*The quarterly
newsletter of the
American Citizen
Services Unit*

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ACS Newsletter Winter 2014 Edition

Winter Issue—2014

U.S. Embassy Nairobi, Kenya

A Message From U.S. Ambassador Robert F. Godec

50 Years of Working Together for Progress



The United States has been a committed partner to the people of Kenya for the past 50 years, and that commitment remains as strong today as it was in 1963. As Kenya celebrates its Jubilee year, we also celebrate the great progress we have made together and the many milestones we have reached.

Of course, it would be impossible to celebrate the U.S.—Kenya relationship without celebrating the contributions of private Americans. From U.S. business people who have helped build Kenya into the commercial hub of East Africa, to young entrepreneurs who are helping to build Kenya's bright future, to the many volunteers across the country who have given their time and expertise to some of the poorest communities in the country, American citizens have been and will always be part of the fabric weaving Kenya and the United States together.

As we look forward to celebrating this Jubilee year with the Kenyan people, I want to say thank you to all of you for your hard work and dedication, and the important role you play in maintaining the strong relationship so important to our two countries.

Robert Godec



A Message from Consul General Mea Arnold



I'll tell you one thing about working in Kenya: It's never boring!

Since I arrived last summer we have been hit with one major crisis after another. There was the airport fire, Westgate, and most recently, the unrest in South Sudan that forced hundreds of Americans to be evacuated to Nairobi.

Dealing with all these situations has reminded of how important it is to **be prepared!** You don't have to live your life as if disaster is always right around the corner, but there are some relatively simple things you can do to make sure you and your family are safe in the event of an emergency, such as: Don't let your passport expire; Have some key phone numbers and contact information on a card that you carry with you, instead of stored on your phone; Have some cash on hand; Pack a "go" bag.

In addition to the above, I can't urge you strongly enough to make sure you are registered with the Embassy through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). This is the system we use to keep you informed during crisis situations. If you've already registered, make sure your information is up to date and accurate. And make sure to give us your mobile phone info if you want to receive SMS messages in addition to e-mails (see below for more on that topic).

Of course, we all hope and pray that we never have to put our emergency procedures into action, but better to have them and not need them than to need them and not have them!

KIT with ACS through SMS!

The American Citizen Services Unit has a number of ways of keeping in touch with U.S. citizens spread throughout the country. In an emergency, if one system fails, it is important to have a back up!

An easy way to stay in touch is via SMS text message. Many Americans living in Kenya find this to be the easiest and most convenient way to receive communications from the Embassy.

But there's one problem: **We can't send you a text if we don't have your phone number!**

Many U.S. citizens register with us by using the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) and providing an e-mail address. However, the system does not require a local phone number so many don't provide it. Without a local phone number, we can't send you an SMS.

So, if you want to receive SMS messages from the Embassy but haven't given us your phone number, or you did give us a number at one point but your number has since changed, then please send a message to Kenya_ACS@state.gov and we will add you to our list.

You Spoke, We Listened Following up on the last Town Hall/Warden Meeting

In October and November 2013, we held town hall meetings for U.S. citizens in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa. During those meetings, we fielded a lot of questions and suggestions from members of the community. We took this feedback very seriously, and have used it to refine some of our old procedures and institute several new ones. In this section, the ACS Unit would like to update you on how we responded to your questions, comments, and suggestions.

Q: It can be difficult for wardens to keep track of the people registered in their zone. At the same time, many registrants do not know who their wardens are. What can be done about this?

A: Beginning in December 2013 the ACS unit started a new policy of sending each new long-term registrant an e-mail with their warden's name and contact information. The wardens are also CC'd on these messages. We hope this will lead to closer connections between wardens and registrants in each zone.

Q: Could the Embassy send out a document containing contact information for the Embassy and the ACS unit (including after hours and emergency numbers)?

A: We created this document and sent it out to every registered American in early November 2013. The list included the current ACS phone number and the emergency number for the U.S. Embassy. It also included the "999" police emergency number which should be the first number you call in case of a violent crime incident.

Q: Why don't we get more information and advice about maintaining personal security?

A: Beginning with this issue of the ACS newsletter, we will feature a column produced by the Regional Security Officer (RSO) highlighting crime trends, security tips, and ways to keep you and your loved ones safe.

Q: Would the Embassy provide support for events bringing together U.S. citizens living in the same zones?

A: Unfortunately, the Embassy cannot offer financial support for social events, but ACS would be happy to supply ideas, information, and other non-monetary support as needed. Another suggestion is for wardens to create Facebook pages for all registrants in their areas. This would enable wardens to keep in touch with registrants without needing to meet them in person (especially useful in remote areas). Social media training for wardens will be provided at the next warden meeting (stay tuned for details!)

If you have a question we didn't cover in this section, please contact Kenya_ACS@state.gov and the ACS unit will be happy to assist.

SECURITY UPDATE**Regional Security Office (RSO)****CREDIT CARD FRAUD**

Here are some tips to help protect yourself from credit card fraud.

DO:

- Sign your cards as soon as they arrive
- Carry your cards separately from your wallet, in a zippered compartment, a business card holder or another small pouch
- Keep a record of your account numbers, their expiration dates and the phone number and address of each company in a secure place
- Keep an eye on your card during the transaction and get it back as quickly as possible.
- Void incorrect receipts
- Destroy carbons
- Save receipts to compare with billing statements.
- Open bills promptly and reconcile accounts monthly, just as you would your checking account
- Report any questionable charges promptly and in writing to the card issuer

**DON'T**

- Lend your card(s) to anyone.
- Leave your cards or receipts lying around.
- Sign a blank receipt. When you sign a receipt, draw a line through any blank spaces above the total.
- Give out your account number over the phone unless you are making the call to a company you know is reputable.

ACS TIPS

WORK PERMITS & VISAS

U.S. citizens who are living, working, or visiting Kenya MUST have a valid visa or work permit to stay in Kenya. If you do not have a valid visa or work permit, you risk serious consequences to include detention, deportation, fines, and possible imprisonment. Kenyan immigration officials have been conducting random sweeps of businesses in Nairobi and detaining foreigners found to be in violation of their visa status.



If you are in Kenya on a tourist visa, you are not permitted to work on that visa category. U.S. citizens are urged not to trust “fixers” who offer to make arrangements to renew visas or transfer tourist visas into work permits. For more information about Kenyan visas and immigration policies, please go to <http://www.immigration.go.ke> or call the Kenyan Immigration head office in Nairobi (Nyayo House) at 020 2222 022

VOTING**How can voters confirm if they are registered or not?**

A: All U.S. citizens overseas who wish to vote must submit a new [Federal Postcard Application \(FPCA\)](#) in each calendar year (January – December) they wish to vote unless their state specifically does not required it. If the voter does not recall submitting a new FPCA in 2014, they should submit a new FPCA to remain active on the voter rolls. While they are likely still registered, they need to submit a new FPCA to request 2014 ballots. Thirty eight states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico now have websites voters can visit to [confirm their registration](#). Valid registration does not necessarily confirm that the state has received a valid absentee ballot request for that voter. Encourage every voter to go online to www.fvap.gov to complete a new Federal Post Card Application for each calendar year and every time they change their mailing address, email address or name.

ADOPTIONS

We are aware that many U.S. citizens have questions about the process of adopting a child in Kenya. There have been some changes in the way these cases are handled, and the ACS Unit looks forward to answering your questions about the adoption process. We plan to hold a [town hall meeting](#) to discuss adoption at the [end of March 2014](#). Look for a message soon confirming the time and date.

Profiles of American Citizens Living in Kenya

U.S. citizens living in Kenya are doing amazing things every day! In this new regular feature of the ACS Newsletter, we will spotlight some of those members of the community who are making a positive impact. If you want to be included in this section, send a message to Kenya_ACS@state.gov.

Community Spotlight Page

PROFILE: ANDREW PARRIS

Andrew Parris moved to Nairobi with his family from Los Angeles in June 2011 to work for the East Africa Regional Office of World Vision, a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

A PhD in Mechanical Engineering from MIT, Andrew used to work for Lockheed Martin on the Atlas rocket program in Denver, CO. Now Andrew leads "Process Improvement" for World Vision's nine East African countries. In practical terms, this means helping World Vision employees to do higher quality work, faster, and at lower cost – so that World Vision can serve more people with greater impact. For example, in Ethiopia the time to hire new staff has been reduced from 131 days to 40 days. Within the region, process improvements have reduced World Vision annual operating costs by nearly a million dollars to date.



50 Years of Memories—We Want to Hear Yours!



In honor of the 50th anniversary of US-Kenya relations, we are looking for stories and anecdotes from our American community living in Kenya. Tell us about the moments that have defined your Kenyan experience. Whether you have been in Kenya 2 days or 20 years, we are sure you must have some great stories to share. Send yours to Kenya_ACS@state.gov and we will run them in our next Spring issue. Asante!



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You can also find us on our
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<http://nairobi.usembassy.gov>

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Upcoming Holidays

American and Kenyan Holidays:

- April 18—Good Friday
- April 21—Easter Monday
- May 1—Labor Day
- May 26—Memorial Day

